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E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 484 - JANUARY 20, 1978

LONDON FOR KINSOLVING

PARIS FOR NICHOLAS MURPHY
OTHER ADDRESSEES FOR CHIEFS OF MISSION

1. EGYPT-ISRAEL. EGYPTIANS WERE DESCRIBED AS STUNNED BY SADAT'S RECALL OF FOREIGN MINISTER KAMIL. THEY APPEARED CONCERNED THAT SADAT'S DRAMATIC EFFORT TO ACHIEVE PEACE HAD COME TO AN ABRUPT HALT. NEVERTHELESS, MOST PUBLIC REMARKS SUPPORTED SADAT'S ACTION. A COMMONLY EXPRESSED BELIEF WAS THAT SADAT HAD NO CHOICE. ONE GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE SUMMED UP THE POPULAR REACTION BY REMARKING. "WE CANNOT BEG THE ISRAELIS FOR PEACE. WE CANNOT FORCE THEM TO HAVE PEACE EITHER."

2. EGYPTIAN EYES ARE NOW FOCUSSED ON SADAT'S ASSEMBLY SPEECH CURRENTLY SCHEDULED FOR SATURDAY EVENING. WE HAVE HAD LITTLE INDICATION OF WHAT THE PRESIDENT PLANS TO SAY. THERE HAS BEEN RAMPANT SPECULATION, HOWEVER, THAT HE MAY OFFER TO RESIGN -- JUST AS NASSER DID IN THE WAKE OF

THE 1967 WAR. IF SADAT WERE TO TAKE SUCH A DRASTIC STEP, IT WOULD VERY LIKELY BE REJECTED BY THE ASSEMBLY, WHICH QUICKLY PERSUADED NASSER TO RETRACT HIS INTENDED RESIGNATION.

3. THE ISRAELI REACTION TO SADAT'S DECISION TO RECALL EGYPT'S POLITICAL DELEGATION WAS ONE OF SHOCK AND ANGER, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ACCORDING TO EMBASSY TEL AVIV. MOST OF THE PRESS COMMENTARY RESENTED SADAT'S MOVE, PARTICULARLY AT A TIME WHEN ALL DELEGATIONS WERE PUBLICLY SAYING THAT PROGRESS WAS BEING MADE, AND URGED BEGIN TO REMAIN FIRM. SADAT PERSONALLY ALSO SEEMS TO HAVE FARED BADLY WITH THE ISRAELI PUBLIC BY HIS ACTION. PRIVATE COMMENTS SUGGEST THAT HIS ALLEGED IMPULSIVENESS AND CAPRICIOUSNESS, WHICH SERVED HIM WELL IN DECIDING INITIALLY TO VISIT ISRAEL, HAD IN THIS INSTANCE HAD "DESTRUCTIVE" AND NEGATIVE EFFECTS.

4. AS THE ISRAELIS ATTEMPTED TO ANALYZE SADAT'S REASONING, SEVERAL THEMES RAN THROUGH PRESS EDITORIALS AND PRIVATE COMMENTS. MOST VIEWED IT AS A COLDLY CALCULATED TACTICAL MOVE. COMMENTATORS SUGGESTED THAT IT WAS DESIGNED TO ENLIST US PRESSURE ON ISRAEL; SHORE UP SADAT'S CREDIBILITY AT HOME AT A TIME WHEN NEGOTIATIONS HAD SEEMINGLY BOGGED DOWN OVER DETAILS; AND ATTEMPT TO OFFSET ARAB CRITICISM OF HIS INITIATIVES, BY A SHOW OF FIRMNESS IN THE FACE OF PERCEIVED ISRAELI "INTRANSIGENCE."

5. IN SUM, SADAT'S SUDDEN ACTION SEEMS TO HAVE HAD A

BACKLASH EFFECT IN ISRAEL. IT HAS SERVED TO GALVANIZE ISRAELI PUBLIC OPINION IN SUPPORT OF BEGIN AND HAS GENERATED BACKING FOR BEGIN'S APPROACH TO PEACE AS BEING REASONABLE AND SUFFICIENTLY FORTHCOMING. IT ALSO SEEMS TO HAVE GIVEN ISRAELIS PAUSE TO RECONSIDER THE WISDOM OF, IN THEIR VIEW, MOVING SO HURRIEDLY TOWARD PEACE. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

6. OTHER REACTIONS. THE SOVIETS THUS FAR ARE REACTING CAUTIOUSLY TO THE BREAKDOWN IN TALKS. TASS BRIEFLY AND WITHOUT COMMENT ANNOUNCED SADAT'S RECALL OF THE EGYPTIAN DELEGATION ON JANUARY 18, AND COMMENTARY SINCE THEN HAS BEEN LIMITED. WHAT COMMENT THERE HAS BEEN HAS FOCUSED ON REITERATING MOSCOW'S OPPOSITION TO SADAT'S UNILATERAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MOVES AND ON BLAMING BEGIN AND THE US FOR THE "EXPECTED" BREAKDOWN IN NEGOTIATIONS.

7. RADIO MOSCOW'S ARABIC SERVICE ON JANUARY 19, FOR EXAMPLE, ATTRIBUTED SADAT'S ACTION TO A "COLLAPSE OF ILLUSIONS" IN CAIRO ABOUT US WILLINGNESS TO PRESSURE ISRAEL. BUT THE BROADCAST ALSO WARNED THAT WASHINGTON AND TEL AVIV ARE STILL PRESSING FOR SEPARATE TALKS BELIEVING THAT SADAT HAS NO OTHER CHOICE. A RADIO MOSCOW ENGLISH BROADCAST ON THE SAME DAY, MEANWHILE, CLAIMED THAT THE JERUSALEM BREAKDOWN HAS DEMONSTRATED THE "CORRECTNESS OF SOVIET VIEWS" ON GENEVA AND THE NEED FOR INCLUSION OF ALL INTERESTED PARTIES INCLUDING THE PLO IN NEGOTIATIONS.

8. SYRIAN MEDIA REACTION WAS CONTRADICTORY. AL-BAATH USED COMMENTS OF "OBSERVERS" AND A LIBERAL USE OF EXCLAMATION MARKS TO DRIVE HOME THE POINT THAT THIS WAS PART OF A "CONSPIRACY" CONDUCTED IN STAGES IN WHICH SADAT WOULD SOON CONCLUDE A BILATERAL DEAL. OTHER PAPERS SAID THE EPISODE ILLUSTRATED THE FAILURE OF SADAT'S POLICY.

9. A PALESTINIAN SPOKESMAN IN BEIRUT HAS DESCRIBED SADAT'S SUSPENSION OF PEACE TALKS IN JERUSALEM AS A MANEUVER AND SAID HE IS PREPARING FOR FURTHER CONCESSIONS.

10. SAUDI RADIO SUPPORTED SADAT'S WITHDRAWAL. THE ISRAELI PLAN WAS VIEWED AS A BLUEPRINT FOR CAPITULATION. THE SAUDI PRESS AGREED NOW WAS THE TIME TO RESTORE ARAB UNITY. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

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11. PLO. PLO HARDLINER SALAH KHALAF RECENTLY GAVE AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW TO BEIRUT'S MONDAY MORNING MAGAZINE, IN WHICH HE ASSERTED THAT:

(A) THE PLO WOULD REJECT ANY RESULTS ARISING FROM SADAT'S INITIATIVE;

(B) THE DECEMBER TRIPOLI SUMMIT HAS "PRODUCED NO PRACTICAL RESULTS THUS FAR";

(C) THE "STEADFASTNESS FRONT" OF HARDLINE ARAB STATES WILL NOT BE ANTI-SADAT, BUT RATHER DESIGNED TO "STAND UP TO THE ISRAELI CHALLENGE";

(D) THE PALESTINIANS WOULD NOT ACCEPT ANY ALTERNATE HOMELAND; MOREOVER, A PALESTINIAN STATE WOULD NOT BE A SOVIET PUPPET AS SUGGESTED BY THE ISRAELIS.

EMBASSY BEIRUT CONSIDERS KHALAF'S INTERVIEW AS PARTICULARLY NOTEWORTHY BECAUSE IT WAS THE MOST MODERATE PLO STATEMENT SINCE THE SADAT INITIATIVE AND IT EXPRESSED THE FIRST PUBLIC PLO RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE TRIPOLI SUMMIT. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE) CHRISTOPHER

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